

**Board of County Commissioners
Leon County, Florida**

**Workshop
on
Innovation Park Task Force Final Report
Presentation**

**November 25, 2003 – 4:00 P.M.
Commission Chambers**

Innovation Park Task Force Report to the Board of County Commissioners

I. OVERVIEW

On April 29, 2003, the Board of County Commissioners authorized a Task Force to review the issues surrounding the role and impact of Innovation Park in the economic development of Tallahassee and Leon County. In particular, the Task Force was to review extant plans for the expansion and development of a 'University Campus' on the part of Florida State University and to determine the impact of those plans.

The Innovation Park Task Force was comprised of:

- Mr. Tony Grippa, Chairman, Board of County Commissioners
- Mr. John Marks, Mayor, City of Tallahassee
- Ms. Sylvia Jordan, Chair, Leon County Research and Development Commission
- Ms. Sue Dick, President, Economic Development Council
- Dr. T.K. Wetherell, President, Florida State University
- Dr. Fred Gainous, President, Florida A&M University
- Dr. Bill Law, President, Tallahassee Community College

To fulfill its charge, the Task Force met on three occasions in publicly advertised meetings. A working decision was reached that the Task Force would not seek public testimony in its meetings. Information needs to assist the work of the Task Force would be handled by the respective members.

II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE INNOVATION PARK TASK FORCE REPORT

A series of recommendations was adopted by the Task Force toward the end of providing guidance and energy to the present discussions on expanding economic opportunities in Tallahassee/Leon County. These recommendations include:

- a moderate restructuring of the Board of Innovation Park;
- the initiation of a more aggressive marketing campaign for the park;
- a more focused role and responsibility for the universities and community college;
 - incentives for increased participation in Innovation Park
 - establishment of a business incubator
 - provision for expansion of the FAMU-FSU College of Engineering
- expansion of the size of Innovation Park;
- review of land use and ownership by city, county, and state for major parcels proximate to Innovation Park or the University campus;
- enhancement of roads and related access to Innovation Park, Florida A&M University, and downtown Tallahassee;

- that a concept of an "Education Quadrant" be further developed toward the end of unifying the several major initiatives presently identified in support of community and economic development.

The deliberations of the Task Force also addressed three issues that had emerged in civic discussions at the time the Task Force was established:

- First, the efforts of the Innovation Park Task Force were not intended to supplant the Mayor's Economic Summit. Indeed, it became clear that these two initiatives were complementary in their scope and focus.
- Second, the efforts of the Innovation Park Task Force were not related to organizational issues pertaining to the FAMU-FSU College of Engineering.
- Third, the earlier plans put forward by Florida State University for the creation of a 1,500 acre University Park campus under the purview of an expanded, Innovation Park Board were being reformulated by the new administration.

III. SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE INNOVATION PARK TASK FORCE

Section One: Areas of common consensus

1. That the Board of Innovation Park be expanded to include the Mayor of the City of Tallahassee and the president of Tallahassee Community College;

The Board of Directors of Innovation Park has indicated its support for this recommendation and will present the necessary request to the Board of County Commissioners in the near future.

2. That the concept of an Education Quadrant as a unifying vision of a cohesive strategy for Tallahassee's economic development be further developed;

Still in a conceptual stage, the Education Quadrant is intended to provide a unifying vision for the growth of Tallahassee's southwest area. Within the Education Quadrant are located FSU, FAMU, TCC all of which will spend millions of dollars in the coming decade on growth and enhancement. Similarly, expenditures identified in Blueprint 2000, in the enhancement of Leon County schools, at the Tallahassee Regional Airport, at Innovation Park and in the Cascades Trail initiative will also add significantly to the improvement of this part of our community. Relating the projects to each other to the maximum extent possible has the added benefit of making 'the whole greater than the sum of the parts.'

As this concept takes shape, existing plans for the institutions should be the basis for moving forward. The concept is not intended to cause major redirection of existing efforts, but rather to meld these existing efforts into a more cohesive and mutually supportive community plan.

Section Two: Specific recommendations

1. That Innovation Park acquire additional land to assure its ability to support all of the necessary facets of economic development;

This recommendation is an important part of the larger effort to find the 'highest and best use' for a number of parcels owned by the city, county, and state in the area of Innovation Park and the University Campus. At present fewer than 100 acres remain available for new development.

2. That the Innovation Park Board establish incentives for Florida State University, Florida A&M University, and Tallahassee Community College to encourage the enthusiastic pursuit of employers to locate or remain in the park;

FSU, FAMU, and to a lesser extent TCC, have contacts in the national and international communities that might provide opportunities to attract new investments in Innovation Park. The Task Force discussed several options, particularly relating to assignment of land for the education institutions to control, that could add to the active 'marketing' of Innovation Park. Other incentives to attract or retain tenants should be developed by the Innovation Park Board.

3. That land immediately adjacent to the FAMU-FSU College of Engineering be assigned to the College of Engineering for its future growth and development;

An important outcome of the Task Force's work was the clarification that the future of the College of Engineering was not within the purview of the Board of Innovation Park. At the same time, the value of the College of Engineering (COE) and its proximate location to Innovation Park cannot be overestimated. Consequently, the Task Force has recommended that some acreage immediately adjacent to the present site of the College of Engineering be designated for use by the COE. Again, the Innovation Park Board has indicated its support for the recommendation.

4. That the City Commission and the Board of County Commissioners review the existing plans for tracts of land under their purview to determine how such land can be used to the benefit of economic development in Innovation Park, specifically, and in the Education Quadrant, generally;

Both governmental entities had made land acquisitions in years past in the area under review by the Task Force. It appears obvious that a forward looking assessment of how these lands can best be used to encourage/support economic and community development is timely. Commissioner Grippa and Mayor Marks indicated that they would initiate these reviews.

A map indicating the location of these parcels is included at Attachment A.

5. That an aggressive plan for marketing Innovation Park be adopted by the Board of Innovation Park;

- a. a preeminent role in the plan's development and implementation being assigned to Florida State University, Florida A&M University, and Tallahassee Community College;
- b. the plan should also identify the highest and best use of the revenues, present and future, available to the Innovation Park Board.

As noted above, the need for FAMU, FSU, and TCC to become more active in the development of Innovation Park is indicated. The considerable expertise of the three institutions in this area will be needed to assure that Innovation Park remains viable in the ever more competitive pursuit and retention of quality employment opportunities.

Innovation Park has exercised prudent management of its resources and finds itself in a position where it presently has more than \$3.4 million in reserve, with that amount rising to nearly \$10 million by the end of the decade. The Innovation Park Task Force urges that an appropriate amount of these valuable resources be committed to a renewed effort to market the opportunities for job development and retention in Tallahassee and Leon County.

Section Three: Other recommendations related to economic development

1. That a plan for the establishment of an "Incubator" site be undertaken immediately, calling upon the leadership of FAMU, FSU, and TCC to lead the plan and recommend its implementation to the Board of Innovation Park.

This recommendation is intended to recognize that all three institutions have efforts presently underway to support job growth. Joining these efforts with the resources of Innovation Park seems like a logical step in attempting to "jumpstart" activities in the growth of local job development.

2. That local government entities develop an aggressive 'permit-friendly' land use plan for the encouragement of quality student housing by private developers within the Education Quadrant;
 - a. the plan should anticipate a 10,000 to 15,000 student growth in the higher education institutions in Tallahassee in the next decade;
 - b. the plan should encourage public transportation for student use;
 - c. University master plans should be incorporated into the overall planning;
 - d. Housing for non-students needs to be included;
 - e. The overall plan needs to be related to similar planning initiatives for Tallahassee's downtown and for the implementation of Blueprint 2000

The continued growth of Tallahassee's three higher education institutions is a critical component of both economic and community development. The hugely beneficial aspect of the growth are, at times, tempered by the challenges associated with accommodating thousands of additional students each year. This recommendation is intended to provide a basis for a more proactive community response to the

challenges of student growth. Properly implemented, this recommendation could eliminate the piecemeal response of the community and replace it with an enthusiastic, beneficial long-term solution.

3. That a plan be developed as soon as possible to identify a 'gateway' route from Tallahassee Municipal Airport to downtown in a manner that provides a showcase for the resources – institutions, land, and amenities – that make Tallahassee attractive for quality employment;

If Tallahassee is to compete favorably with hundreds of other cities for economic development opportunities, we will need to be attentive to a wide range of issues that impact site relocation decision makers. Making certain that our airport continues to grow as a positive resource is one of those issues. While the Task Force did not address issues attendant to the airport itself, the Task Force did address the generally poor esthetics that presently exist in traveling from the airport to Innovation Park, the universities, and downtown. Without an improved route from the airport to our community resources we will face an even more difficult challenge in attracting new investors to the community.

4. That transportation issues related to economic development, particularly access to the airport via Capital Circle and Orange Ave., be given the highest possible priority in the immediate future;

Innovation Park and the University Campus cannot reach their full potential if they are not made more easily accessible. The Innovation Park Task Force noted with approval the recent decisions of the Board of County Commissioners and others to expedite the plans to improve the major arterial roads in the area of Innovation Park and the University Campus. The Task Force urges that its recommendations and deliberations be added to the plans being formulated in order, once again, to provide additional advantages to our efforts to expand quality employment in our community.

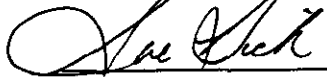
IV. SUMMARY

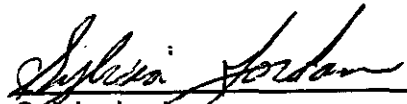
The Innovation Park Task Force recognizes that its efforts do not, of themselves, constitute a plan for economic development. That work is the responsibility of all of the constituent members of the Task Force and of the community as a whole. However, the work of the Task Force, taken in total, can be the basis for resolving some long-standing impediments to future economic development and, further, can provide the beginning of a comprehensive, long-term vision to guide the many separate initiatives taking place in Tallahassee and Leon County.


The Innovation Park Task Force urges the Board of County Commissioners to proceed with the necessary steps to refine and implement the recommendations presented herein. The members of the Innovation Park Task Force remain at your call for help and assistance.


Thank you.

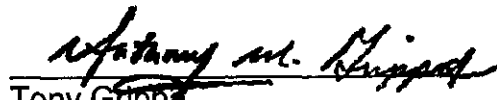
Respectfully submitted:



Sue Dick
President
Economic Development Council

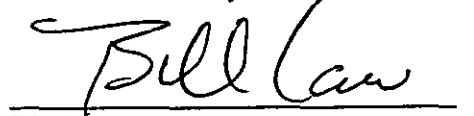

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(November 2003)

Attachment A

University Park Area Land Owners

